

# RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH I. 18.

EDITED BY REV. R. CARRIQUE.—PUBLISHED BY AN ASSOCIATION OF GENTLEMEN.

VOL. II.]

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[NO. 14.]

TO MR. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER V.

(concluded from page 98.)

The declaration made to the Jewish people by the Almighty, that "he visiteth the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate him," furnishes us with another example of the same inconclusive mode of reasoning. An argument has been drawn from it, that as it is inconsistent with the justice of God to visit the iniquity of parents upon their offspring in one instance, why not in all. The answer upon the principles stated above is obvious. When circumstances which have an apparent similarity indicate themselves, upon close examination, to be essentially different, no argument from so slight and imperfect an analogy can be admitted. This threat may prove itself to be within the sphere not only of justice, but of benignity. The good enjoyed may yet surpass the evils suffered; and undoubtedly will surpass the deserts of the offending sufferer. The threat was intended to prevent the offence; while it shuts no door to the repentance which severity is calculated and designed to promote; and which will be succeeded by the return of the divine favour and protection. What relation has such an admonition with that final state of things, where punishment infinitely exceeds personal demerit, repentance can be of no avail, and "hope never comes that comes to all?" We must also observe, that, according to the manifest constitution of human affairs, a regular series of cause and effect is established in every station and relation of life;—and the nature and complexion of the one, will be according to the tendency of the other. Parents are not only the source of the existence, but of the lot of their offspring. Both the prosperity and distress of children, in cases innumerable, depend upon the success or adversity, the prudence or imprudence, the virtuous or vicious conduct of the authors of their being. It was therefore a benignant admonition which warned the Israelites that the effects of a rebellious conduct would extend their pernicious influence beyond the existant generation; that by transmitting an idolatrous spirit to their posterity, they necessarily transmit the punishments annexed to it.—In the same declaration they are informed, that mercy would be shewn to thousands of those who loved him and kept his commandments. In this very passage, therefore, the divine benignity shines conspicuous, both in the threat and in the promise; and the disposition to shew mercy is represented as greatly exceeding that to chastise; perfectly harmonizing with the many other assurances, that he is slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy; that he will not always chide, nor retain his anger forever. Assurances as opposite to the system we are combatting as the meridian day to the gloom of midnight; as the joys of heaven to the pangs of hell. If that system be true, the punishment is inflicted upon souls that could not be admonished by the threat; the visitation is an eternity of pure unalloyed misery; the Deity is quick to revenge, infinitely slow to pardon; he doth chide where there is no fault; and his anger endureth forever without any just provocation!

If arguments from slight analogies formed upon admitted facts thus prove inconclusive, those deduced from vague conjecture ought to prove more unsatisfactory. In your attempt to convince the sceptic of the truth of the Christian religion, which, according to your creed, necessarily

comprehends the belief of this doctrine; you demand of him whether "all this weight of evidence is to be over-balanced by this one difficulty on a subject so confessedly high and mysterious? considering, too, that he must allow we see but a part,—oh, how small a part of the universal creation of God, and that our faculties are incompetent to judge of the scheme of his infinite wisdom." Not to observe that the whole mystery on the subject is, that any man of sense can admit such a doctrine without evidence, and that every difficulty is at once removed by rejecting it; not to repeat what has already been advanced to prove the futility of your reasoning concerning the incompetency of the human faculties, to judge of religious tenets; it is very apparent from the above passage, that you feel yourself necessitated to plunge into the immensity of creation in search of an argument to justify your hypothesis.—We shall follow you for a moment, attempt to give shape and consistency to vague ideas couched under general expressions, and shew that your system can derive no consolation or support from this quarter. Your observation can only be relevant to the subject by its suggesting, that the plan of Providence towards our first parents and their offspring, may be intimately connected with, and exert an important influence over, some other part of the universal system. But we can conceive of no other influence than the force of example; and the only object of this example must be to deter other probationary beings from the imitation of a similar conduct. If this, Sir, be your meaning, the objections against it are as formidable as any that have been urged against the doctrine which gave it existence. How large do you imagine the number of these parental representatives of future offsprings, which require such an expense of happiness in order to keep them in awe? What ideas shall we form of their primitive character, if methods like these are requisite to retain them in their allegiance? Must they not be too depraved to merit such sacrifices? Or dare we for a moment entertain the horrid idea that the divine wisdom and goodness can discover no better methods in order to teach lessons of obedience to surrounding worlds? Can cruelty and injustice become the basis of the moral government of the most perfect of beings? Will he create a mass of misery among one race of his creatures that another may escape it? It is most true, Sir, that we cannot fathom the depths of infinite wisdom.—"The ways of the most perfect Being are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts." They are infinitely better, not infinitely worse. They are "high as the heavens above our thoughts and our ways," not deeper than the abyss below them! If this condemnation of the human race for the sin of Adam be itself cruel and unjust, as you acknowledge yourself sometimes tempted to suspect, the utmost extent of its uses cannot alter its nature. We are forbidden to do evil that good may come; and infinite perfection will never set us the example. Tyranny itself in its most wanton exertions, has never devised or executed a plan so extravagant; has never attempted to retain one class of subjects in obedience, by gibbeting the innocent offspring of another!

These remarks may possibly convince you, that your embryo argument again proceeds from a very defective analogy. You must now suppose that, because exemplary punishment may be useful among one class of frail and imperfect creatures, it becomes absolutely requisite to prevent the frailties and imperfections of another:—because

the guilty are made to suffer for the good of the community they have injured, the innocent offspring of the guilty may be exposed to sufferings unparalleled, for the good of a state with which they have no other connexion;—because pains and imprisonments form too large a portion of our defective governments, they are absolutely necessary under the perfect administration of a most perfect Being, to retain one part of the universal system in obedience; and that he has created a race or races of beings, whose powers and dispositions have been exactly adapted to such dissingenuous motives.

Thus, my good Sir, do we find, upon taking not a partial and superficial, but a full and comprehensive survey of this doctrine, as stated by its warmest advocates, that it is surrounded by the most formidable objections; objections which cannot be confuted nor evaded. Your system, professing to lay the whole plan of Providence before us, enables us to judge of its nature and complexion: and we may safely pronounce that it is inconsistent with the perfections of Deity. The divine attributes are so implicated in this transaction, that one cannot possibly escape without the impeachment of some other. There must have been a deficiency in foresight, in wisdom, in power, in justice, or in goodness, or the event as represented in your system, could not have happened. If Satan deceived the Allwise, then was he still wiser:—if he succeeded in opposition to the exertions of the Almighty to prevent the evil, then was he more powerful:—if the event took place with his concurrence or connivance, then was it conspiracy with the evil one, contrary to all the principles of justice, goodness, and commiseration; and he whose nature and character it is to hate sin and misery, formed a league with Satan to render them perpetual! Surely, Sir, these inductions, flowing so necessarily from your system, ought to make you tremble. Look at it again, and say, can a doctrine which contains such an accumulation of absurdities and impieties, be deemed honourable to our Creator? ought it to be considered as the basis of true Christianity?

If you still remain unconvinced of your error, respecting the doctrine itself, you will, it is hoped, conclude from the above train of reasoning, that when the nominal Christian renounces a doctrine you think so essential, he may also be actuated by a concern for the honor of God; that it is not a desire to extol human nature in a manner flattering to human pride, which prompts him to deny this original depravity, with its consequent punishment; nor a wish to shew himself wise above what is written, which induces him to reject the supposed covenant as apocryphal, and contemplate its conditions with horror. He argues not for himself, but the character of his God, and your God is intimately concerned in the debate: that Being whom we are commanded both to love and imitate. Since it is enjoined upon us that we "be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect," how important is it that we entertain the most worthy ideas of the divine character and conduct, in order that obedience to his commands may be in unison with the imitation of his example! But if your system be true, the imitation of the divine model would naturally lead us to be incautious, or unjust, or cruel; implacable in our resentments, and partial in our forgiveness. We also should feel ourselves entitled to revenge every injury under the pretext of satisfying vindictive justice; for if justice in the abstract necessarily requires the punishment of the offender, neither can we pardon without committing an offence against it, by being unjust to ourselves.

We are commanded to "love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our might:" but this devout and ardent affection can only be founded upon a conviction of his superlative goodness. Every sentiment that has a tendency to check this conviction, must inevitably damp the ardor of our affection. Every sentiment that largely displays the divine benignity is calculated to fan the devout flame. In the doctrine of original sin, and its ordained consequences, most certain it is that the universal

benevolence of the Deity is not rendered conspicuous; much less is it represented in a manner adapted to warm the generous heart. The only love that can be excited consistent with its principles, is the personal gratitude of the elect, for what they justly term astonishing and unmerited favour. Out of this small circle, the Universal Parent must become an object of terror. The duty must therefore be confined to them; for the non-elect, experiencing no essential benignity, cannot possibly perform it. They must be as destitute of motives, as you deem them destitute of power. There is selfishness also in the affection of the elect, which diminishes the lustre of so excellent a disposition;—for a due regard to that other command, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," would disqualify a benevolent mind for the enjoyment of this exclusive felicity. It would lament the misery of the damned too deeply to feel satisfaction at the distinguished favour conferred upon itself;—unless, indeed, you admit another extravagance, and suppose it will be the office of the same spirit which softens the Christian's heart in this world, to harden it in a more exalted state!

How different this contracted monopolizing temper, and the scheme which inspires it, from that inspired by a conviction of the universal benignity of Deity, entitling us to call upon the whole earth "to rejoice that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" from being fully assured that "his throne is established in righteousness, and that his mercy endureth for ever!" Sentiments like these must impress the *wicked* in the hour of reflection; and they communicate joy unalloyed to the benevolent christian as often as his mind yields itself up to their full impression!

The following letter, was written by Mrs. M. Townsend, of the city of New-York, who has lately been excommunicated from the Presbyterian Church under the pastoral care of Dr. Spring, for the high handed, and unpardonable crime of believing, in the universal, and unlimited goodness of God; or, according to the complaint of the Church for not believing in the "doctrine of the everlasting punishment of the wicked." The letter contains her reasons for believing in the salvation of all men, and is worthy of a candid perusal. Happy would it be for professors of religion, in general, were they able to give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear. Mrs. T. is the person excommunicated, when the Rev. Dr. made that remarkable declaration; "We trust there are no members in this Church who believe this error, but if there are, we request them to keep it to themselves, and they can be held in communion. But if they avow it, we shall be under the painful necessity of excommunicating them!"

New-York, Jan. 31, 1822.

REV. DR. SPRING,

SIR,—Some time has elapsed since our last meeting, which took place at your house, upon the subject of my differing in faith upon some points of doctrine from the church of which I had long been a member. Since that period, I have searched the Scriptures with prayerful attention, I hope, with an eye single to the glory of God, and think I feel rather convinced of the truth than fallacy of the doctrine I at that time advocated. I am well aware that as I am not allied by faith, it is not proper for me to remain longer a member of the church over which you preside; and if consistent, would solicit a dismissal, rather than submit to a public trial, (which I am informed is expected to take place) and hope my name may be withdrawn, without giving offence, in love.

Although we now differ in some points, we are assured



the time is coming, when all shall be taught of God, whom to know is life eternal; when that glorious period arrives, we shall all confess One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God and Father of all. My mind has at times been painfully exercised on the reflection of being denied fellowship, and communion with the church, at a time when my heart was more than ever filled with love and gratitude to my Creator, for the manifestation of his love to man, and anticipated much pleasure in commemorating that love, which led the Father to send his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Although I was not personally acquainted with any of the members, still I felt an attachment for them as Brethren; but in the midst of these trials, the Lord has graciously supported me. On opening his Word of Truth, he has enabled me to feed by faith upon the bread of life; he has pointed me to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world; on him I cast my care, for I know that he careth for me. I lately heard you preach a Sermon on the atonement, the most of which was truly consoling. Your reasoning and proofs upon its extent and fulness, were unanswerable; but when you endeavoured to show its limited application, I could not reconcile it with many scripture declarations—such as, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of *all men*, (as well as) specially of them that believe. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope:—because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth (or every creature) and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, (believers) even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

These and many other declarations, I think, go far to show, that the atonement will prove efficacious to all for whom it was intended; and that the purpose for which the Saviour came, will be accomplished. He says, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."—That he came to "seek and to save that which was lost;" and that he finished the work his Father gave him to do. The apostle tells us, that "while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." That "there is no other name given under Heaven, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus. Thou shalt call his name Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins." Are we not *all* his people by creation and redemption? (though not by faith.) "My people shall be willing in the day of my power. Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. The heathen thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth thy possession." The Psalmist, when exhorting all the earth to praise the Lord, says, "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Paul declares, "We are also his offspring." The apostle tells us, that "by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. As in Adam all die, even so, in Christ shall all be made alive." It appears from these passages, that the free gift is as extensive as the offence. We read, "The grace of

God which bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, (but not yet to all men) teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."

The question naturally arises, Why are some brought to a knowledge of the truth, whilst others are left to their own blindness, and hardness of heart? Our Saviour was asked by his disciples, why he taught in parables; he replied, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not," &c.—"Even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight," &c.—"As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offence," &c. But, "have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid." (I think Romans xi. throws great light on the subject.) "For God hath concluded them *all* in unbelief, that he might have mercy on *all*." Well might the apostles break out in this rapturous exclamation, "O! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Under these considerations he says, "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service*." The apostle to the Ephesians says, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, *even* in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ; in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

It appears that the mystery of God's will, is, that he might gather together in one *all* things in Christ, &c. He says, "After that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, ye believed." The gospel of their salvation, was a truth as much *before*, as after they believed it; otherwise, faith creates the object of our belief. The record that God has given of his Son, is, that in him "we have eternal life;" (this is a truth,) if we believe it not, we make god a liar. 1 John v. 11. So long as we disbelieve this truth, we are in a state of condemnation; being ignorant of the things that make for our peace, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; and we suffer the misery consequent upon unbelief. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful." What if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid, yea, let God be true, but every man a liar:—no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost:—when the Spirit takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them unto us, we shall believe his testimony. We cannot love the character of God until we *know* him. "He who loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is Love. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. We love him because he *first* loved us." Thus it appears to me. We read, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. But now, we see not all things yet put under him; but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering or death crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for *every man*. For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." It ap-

pears, those spoken of as being *all* their life-time subject to bondage through fear of death, were *unbelievers*; yet Christ came to deliver them.

I am taught that, "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." That "had there been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. We are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." That "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." When we all like sheep had gone astray, the "Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all. That he suffered, the just for the unjust. His soul was made an offering for sin. He was *delivered* for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Therefore, "being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (The knowledge of these facts gives us peace; or by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.) If I know my own heart, upon this foundation rests my hope,—the sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Redeemer. "Even the righteousness of God, *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, *and upon all them that believe*; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified *freely* by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth, to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? What God hath cleansed, call not thou common" or unclean. Under a realizing sense of these truths, I am constrained to say, with Peter, "Forasmuch then as God hath given unto them (the world,) the like gifts as he has unto us who believe on the Lord, what am I, that I should withstand God? Who hath made me to differ from those that see not the things that make for their peace?"

I know not that it is necessary to say more. What I have written appears to me to be truth. When I hear the *restitution of all things* spoken of by all God's holy prophets, (Acts iii. 21.) and the declaration of Jehovah to Abraham, saying, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" and again, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth, righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear, surely shall say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, to him shall come," &c.; I am fully persuaded he is *able* to perform what he has promised, and that he will do all his pleasure. We are told, "*The last enemy shall be destroyed, Death.*" So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying, Death is swallowed up in victory. The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

How can I reconcile these consoling declarations with the doctrine of *endless misery*? If these sentiments be erroneous, my *understanding* must be convinced before I can renounce them. I have endeavoured to give a reason of the hope that is in me, I trust, with meekness and fear.

MARIA TOWNSEND.

P. S. Since writing the above, I have received a citation to appear before the Session on Monday, the 11th inst. which I decline doing, as I have written all I have to say, presuming this will be laid before the Session.

*At a meeting of the Session of the Brick Church, Beekman-street, held in Session Room, Friday, June 23, 1822.*

The Committee in the case of Mrs. Maria Townsend, reported, That they had called on Mrs. T. and made a last effort to convince her of her error, and they regret to say that their efforts were without any salutary effect.

Whereupon resolved, That Maria Townsend be excommunicated from this Church, and that the first public announcement of this sentence be made the ensuing Lord's Day.

Ordered, That the following minute be made in the above case.

Whereas Maria Townsend hath been, by sufficient proof, convicted of persevering disbelief of the doctrine of the everlasting punishment of the wicked, and after much admonition and prayer, obstinately refused to hear the Church, and hath manifested no evidence of repentance, therefore, in the name, and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, this Session pronounce her to be excluded from the communion of the Church.

Ordered, That the Clerk furnish Mrs. Townsend with a copy of the above proceedings in her case.

#### ANOTHER EXCOMMUNICATION.

By the following we discover the general prevalence of that bigoted and persecuting spirit which burns in the bosom of the believers of orthodoxy, and blazes forth in denunciations, and excommunications, which are a disgrace to this enlightened age. Because a man believes, that the Almighty is good, impartially good to all his rational offspring, is he to be proscribed, and expelled from religious society? Is it such a crime to believe that God will pardon and forgive his children and lead them all to true repentance, that a man cannot be considered a Christian?

Mr. Winchester is charged with the great crime of not believing in "the endless punishment of the *finally impenitent*." It is presumed that if Mr. W. had found this doctrine in the Bible he would have been disposed to believe it; but unfortunately for the advocates of endless misery, the expression "*finally impenitent*" is not in the sacred volume. No such characters are mentioned in the scriptures. On the contrary, we read that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."—When the world is reconciled there can be no "*finally impenitent*."—Again, "God hath given him, a name which is above every name; that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." When then every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, there will be no "*finally impenitent*." That God will gather together in one, all things in Christ, is scripture doctrine; when this is done there will be no "*finally impenitent*." Shall then a man be excommunicated from the church, because he believes the doctrine taught in the scriptures? So it is.—Would not those Reverend pastors of the church, convince those they excommunicate if in their power? Would they not be willing to have the letters written by those under censure read in their church meetings, or allow the censured personally to give, before the church, their reasons for believing in the salvation of all men, if that sentiment was anti-scriptural and could be easily refuted? Most assuredly they would. But so far from this a person is not allowed to be heard in his own defence. He must either tamely submit to the doctrine of his partial judges, renounce his faith in the universal benevolence of God, or, be excommunicated.

#### EXCOMMUNICATION.

Whereas you HUBBARD H. WINCHESTER, have been adjudged guilty of departing from the faith once delivered to the saints, in denying the endless punishment, of the *finally impenitent*, and in embracing the doctrine of Universal Salvation; also of disorderly walk, in setting yourself up as a preacher of the gospel, without authority, and in advocating and propagating sentiments dangerous to the morals and souls of men, and after due admonition, and much patience, do yet remain obstinate, giving no evidence of repentance; and it being the will and ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ,



that his church have no fellowship with wicked and scandalous persons; but withdraw themselves from every brother who walketh disorderly, and cast such out of the church; and esteem and treat them as heathens and publicans.

I do therefore in the name, and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the consent and by a unanimous vote of this church, declare you, HUBBARD HARRINGTON WINCHESTER, excommunicated and cast out of the communion of the church of Christ; debar you from their privileges, and deliver you into the visible kingdom of satan, for the destruction of thy fleshly and corrupt principles and practices, that thy spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Done in behalf and by a unanimous vote of the church.

EPHRAIM HOLLAND NEWTON,

{ Pastor of the Congregational Church of  
Christ, in this place.

Marlborough, Vermont, Wind-  
ham County, Nov. 1 1822. }

These certify, the above sentence was publicly pronounced at Marlborough aforesaid, in public assembly, Lord's day, Nov. 24. 1822.

Attest, E. H. NEWTON, Pastor.

A true copy—Attest,

E. H. NEWTON, Pastor.

Marlborough, Nov. 26, 1822.

#### COMMUNICATIONS.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

#### THE MORALITY OF THE GOSPEL; OR THE IMMORAL TENDENCY OF CALVINISM. NO. 9.

We commenced an examination of the moral tendency of some of the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism, and in the two last numbers bestowed some considerations on those dogmas of the church, called original sin and total depravity. In the present we will notice the moral influence of the calvinistic notion of *predestination*. This doctrine teaches that God hath, from all eternity by an immutable decree *foreordained whatsoever comes to pass*. There is certainly one recommendation of this dogma; it is at least intelligible, there is nothing mysterious or incomprehensible in it. If God has by an immutable decree, predestinated whatsoever comes to pass, it follows that every thing which takes place must be according to *his will* and a *consequence* of his decree. It will be remembered that it is not so much our purpose to examine the correctness of this doctrine as the practical effect of it; but to do this it may be in some measure important to see how far this notion is founded in truth. The dogma of predestination according to school divinity, does not at all depend on the philosophical principle of *cause and effect*; it supposes that every occurrence however trivial was decreed or *ordered* by the Governor of the universe, and not that it has resulted from the nature and constitution of things. According to this doctrine therefore, every thing which takes place, is the *immediate* effect of a divine decree and is produced by the direct agency of Almighty power; there can be no intermediate causes whatsoever.

The dogma of predestination is precisely the same as that of the *fatalism* of the Greeks and Romans; *fate* or *destiny* with the ancients, was considered as binding even upon the Gods. Most of the Pagans believed in fatalism, and predestination formed a part of the religion of the Jews. But the doctrine of predestination nowhere forms a more prominent feature than in the system taught by Mahomet, and it is among the followers of the prophet, that this doctrine is most implicitly believed, and the pernicious effects of it most conspicuously unfolded. This

faith is calculated to make enthusiasts, to inspire men with extraordinary courage and lead them to encounter great difficulties and perform wonderful exploits. If they can persuade themselves that they are destined to a particular end, or to accomplish certain purposes, they are inspired with confidence which no rational causes can produce. It is in no small degree, to this doctrine, that the spirit, courage and perseverance of the Mahometans of the first ages, are to be ascribed, which gave them so fierce and warlike a character, and enabled them to make such extensive conquests. But the confidence and courage inspired by a belief in this doctrine is a *blind infatuation*, and although it may be directed to useful purposes, its natural operation is the most pernicious; it tends to make men obdurate, inflexible and cruel; to be unjust and unmerciful, regardless of the consequence of their conduct to others and even to themselves. Hence, from the influence of this blind belief, the Mahometans when the plague has appeared among them, have neglected all precautions to check its progress, whereby thousands have fallen miserable victims to its ravages. Believing that every thing which comes to pass, had been predestinated, they deemed it idle to attempt to save themselves; it only remained for them to await their fate. It is a fair test of the moral tendency of any doctrine, to examine what its practical effect would be, if implicitly believed in, and the conduct of its votaries was strictly regulated by it. It is apparent that the dogma of predestination, if fully believed, must take away the effect of the *accountability of man as a free moral agent*. We know that calvinists attempt to reconcile such palpable contradictions, and maintain, that foreordination is perfectly consistent with the free agency of man. But nothing can be more absurd than this; if every act of a man's life has been pre-determined by his maker long before he came into existence, by an immutable decree, can he have any controul over his actions? Can he act contrary to such decree, and defeat the purposes of the Almighty? If he cannot, wherein does his free agency consist? does it consist in doing that which he cannot avoid doing, which he is compelled to do by an inevitable necessity? Does not this doctrine degrade man to a mere *instrument*, or machine, which was not only originally set in operation, but every movement of which, is still directed by its maker.

But this doctrine is as derogatory to the character of God as it is to that of man, for by taking away all moral agency and accountability from the latter, and making him only an instrument in the hands of his creator, it places God in man's stead, and makes Him responsible for all his conduct, his vices and his follies. It not only makes God the author of sin in a general sense, but the immediate agent and cause of every particular sin; if an individual commits a *crime* he only acts in obedience to God's decree laid upon him, and which compels him so to act; to punish him, therefore, must be *unjust*, as he was a mere instrument and was forced to do as he did. Yet the men who believe in such sentiments as these, are the great sticklers for *future punishment*, which they contend is absolutely necessary to the glory of God and the honor of his righteous law. Such is the idea they have of the *justice* of God; no earthly tyrant was ever guilty of such injustice, cruelty and oppression as they attribute to the God of all goodness.

The pernicious and immoral influence of the orthodox notion of predestination, is too apparent to require any remarks on the subject. By depriving man of the character of a free moral agent it is calculated to take away all sense of *moral obligation*, and all just ideas of the dignity of the human character. It destroys, too, all *intermediate causes*, and establishes a *direct* connection between every event and the great first cause. If you strike out of existence all intermediate causes, which constitute the *means* by which results and objects are effected, you remove all grounds and motives for man to attempt to improve his own condition or regulate his own conduct. The natural faculties and propensities of man are admitted by all to be the gift of his

creator; but the operation of these depend in a great degree upon the cultivation and improvement which they may receive, and it is generally admitted that the conduct and character of a man in life, depends more on education and early examples than on his native qualities. But according to the doctrine we are examining, every act of a man's life is the result of the direct agency of God, and was predetermined, long before he came into existence, and consequently it is idle to attempt to train and discipline the mind of youth, to form them to correct habits and give them just views of the moral dignity of their character, as all this will be useless and can have no influence on their conduct or final destiny.

#### FOR THE INQUIRER

The following is copied from the R. I. Religious Intelligencer. I admire the sentiments, and wish them extended.

*Reward of Parents.*—The purest pleasures we taste in this world arise from the sight of the happiness of which we have been the authors. There is a secret tenderness in our nature which loves to soothe and gratify itself in the exercise of the lowest offices of affection. It is pleasing to shelter a plant from the roughness of the elements—to protect a helpless animal from harm. To assist the weak and friendless, and raise the sick man from the bed of languishing, affords an exquisite satisfaction. But if the preservation of a mortal creature to a few years of doubtful character, it may be of tribulation and anguish, is the occasion of such blessedness, how great shall be the transports of that hour when they who have received mercy to be faithful, shall present the children, to whose safety and moral purity they have been devoted, to be admitted with the innumerable company of the blessed to the transcendent and unchangeable glories which shall be revealed.

### RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

SATURDAY, May 17, 1823.

It has long been an opinion, strongly advocated by the believers in orthodoxy, that religion and religious institutions ought ever to be held sacred and treated with the utmost reverence. The man who should speak lightly of any religious service, was considered as a vile wretch deserving of everlasting punishment, and he that would connect any of these services with the concerns or amusements of the vain world, was regarded as a profane person, on whom the charge of blasphemy ought to rest.

Great are the exertions which have been made to fix the charge of profaneness and a want of a due reverence for religious institutions, on the shoulders of Universalists. Be that as it may, surely the orthodox ought to be the last to find fault when they themselves set the example; although we are willing to acknowledge that the following an evil example, is not a sufficient excuse for any one.

It is believed that whatever may be the failings of Universalists, still they are not destitute of a becoming reverence for the institutions of religion, and the ordinances of God. True, they do not make such great pretensions to piety, or sacred regard for religious institutions as some others do; but surely, it is better not to make these professions, and yet live in strict conformity to the several duties required by the laws of God, than to make these pretensions and most profanely violate them.

Our spiritual guides frequently enforce the idea that we are under the immediate inspection of that "ALL-SEEING EYE" which searches the hearts of men; and that God not only sees our every action, but also hears the words we speak; and that we shall have to give an account at the solemn tribunal of Jehovah for every idle thought and word, as well as for our actions. If this be true, we should

suppose that the believers in this doctrine would be extremely careful not to hazard an idle word when the indulgence may terminate in such awful consequences. We should suppose that a believer in this tremendous judgment of endless misery, would put a seal upon his lips, and stay his pen, rather than run the risk of losing eternal life for a display of wit, or an exhibition of satirical genius, in prostituting the ceremonies of religious worship, by introducing them into secular business, for the sole purpose of ridiculing others, and producing a laugh at their expense.

Were a Universalist to take a sacred hymn or song, designed to be used in the temple of the living God, and profanely parody it to profane purposes, he would at once be held up as a fit subject for public execration, as a wicked reviler of sacred things. What then must we think of those, who, professedly believing in the doctrine of endless woe, and in the certainty of a day of judgment, in which all mankind shall be assembled before the bar of God, to be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body; nevertheless make light of religious ceremonies, and attempt a parody on a solemn song, designed to call our minds to a contemplation of the tomb, in which we must all sooner or later be laid, and to lead us to serious reflections on death and eternity. Can that man be a believer in a general judgment and in an eternity of misery beyond the grave, who could sacrilegiously treat with levity solemn thoughts as those expressed in the following lines:

"Hark! from the tombs a doleful sound  
Mine ears attend the cry;  
Ye living men come view the ground  
Where you must shortly lie." &c.

Surely the man who could sport with these solemn reflections, must have a heart harder than ever was Pharaoh's, or, whatever pretensions he may make to a belief in endless misery, he does not believe a word of it.

When we find men violating the laws of charity, and that reverence for religious institutions which have been so long professed, for the purpose of making others appear ridiculous, or to give scope to their wit and ingenuity in producing a laugh, and to show their contempt of a respectable, numerous, and growing denomination of Christians; in whatever light we may view their mental powers, we cannot have a good opinion of the state of their hearts, nor, believe that they have much reverence or respect for religion; and though they may bend at the ALTAR, and press the consecrated cup to their lips, yet when weighed in the balance of righteousness by the impartial hand of infinite WISDOM and JUSTICE, if they should cast their eyes on the wall they will behold, as did Belshazzar, written the fearful word "TEKEL." "Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting."

#### FREETHINKING CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

A Society of Christians bearing the above title, has, recently, been formed in London, and has extended itself into the country. The editors of the "Reformer" inform us that they have lately seen the first number of a publication conducted by this Society called the

#### "FREETHINKING CHRISTIANS' QUARTERLY REGISTER"

"At present assembling in the metropolis, and in various parts of the country, for the purpose both of private improvement and of public teaching."

This church, as stated in the prospectus to the work, "had its origin in a small body of individuals, who, a few years since, impressed with the importance of religion, yet disgusted with the absurdities which generally disgrace its name, resolved to think for themselves—to take the Scriptures and the Scriptures only as the standard of Christianity; and who, equally regardless of that authority which has restrained inquiry, and of those consequences, which men affect to dread from it, determined to 'seek Truth wherever she might be found, and to follow her whithersoever she might lead them.'"



We are happy to find that the excommunication of Mrs. Townsend by Dr. Spring of New York, is noticed by the publishers of papers in different parts of the union; and the anti-Christian and persecuting spirit of orthodoxy, held up to merited contempt. While viewing the operation of this arbitrary power exercised by the clergy, we have great cause for rejoicing, that we enjoy that liberal and happy form of government, which saves us from the prison and the STAKE. The following remarks are from the "New-England Galaxy."

**EXCOMMUNICATION.**—The article in our paper of the 25th of April respecting the excommunication of Mrs. Townsend by Dr. Spring of New-York, has been re-published in the National Intelligencer; on which a correspondent of that paper has made the following comment.

**GENTLEMEN:** At the risk of being classed among the "INFIDELS," where certain mild, gentle, considerate professors of Christianity, have placed you, I must beg permission to offer a few remarks on the case of Mrs. Townsend, as detailed in a late pamphlet published in New-York.

Mrs. Townsend, it appears, having doubts respecting the truth of a single article of belief, professed by the communicants, of the church to which she belonged, wrote a letter to the Pastor, stating her dissent, and "*respectfully requesting a dissolution of her connexion with the Church, without a public trial.*" This request was denied; a Committee of Conference was sent to argue the point, who, finding her immovable in her belief, a session was held, and the following resolution passed, viz:

"Resolved, That Maria Townsend be excommunicated from this Church, and that the first PUBLIC ANNUNCIATION OF THIS SENTENCE be made the ensuing Lord's Day."

It is unnecessary to appeal to any man whose heart is not hardened into stone, by the influence of bigotry and fanaticism combined, in order to excite the keenest indignation at the stern and cruel disregard here employed towards the feelings of a respectable matron. I will venture to say that there is nothing in the history of the bitter and inflexible warfare of different sects, in the most ignorant and bigoted ages of the world, more strongly marked with every character of daring and reckless inhumanity, than this case, which is a disgrace to the age, and a double disgrace to the country in which we live.

It is at war with the mild spirit of religion: It is an outrage upon the feelings of humanity; it is a wanton and cruel sporting with the heart of one who belongs to a sex, which none but brutes and cowards would dare thus to assail; it is an attempt to coerce men and women into a belief, in a particular point of doctrine, by the fear of public reproach and denunciation.

And this happens, this is permitted, in a country where it is solemnly acknowledged, nay asserted as one of the fundamental principles of the Constitution, that a difference in religious opinions, shall not subject either man, woman, or child, to civil disability or clerical persecution! I should like to know what persecution is? If to drag a matron before the public, for the purpose of holding her up to the scorn and dejection of an assembled congregation, gathered together to hear the words of peace and good-will to all mankind—if to denounce her as an apostate from the true faith, and turn her adrift, as it were, with the mark of Cain upon her forehead, to be an object of horror to her brethren and sisters, with whom she has been accustomed to kneel at the foot-stool of God, to offer up her prayers to the Throne of Grace—to utter her thanks, to ask forgiveness for herself and all her enemies—if this is not persecution, nay, the keenest, the most heart-breaking persecution, I know not what persecution is. At this moment, and for the remainder of her life, this helpless matron is, and will

so continue, an object of indescribable horror to her most intimate associates: the ties which knit her to that circle, with whom she has been accustomed, perhaps from her infancy, to exchange the courtesies and good offices of friendly intimacy, are broken, most likely forever. She will be thrown upon the world anew, to form new connections with society, and when she meets any of her sister communicants of the church, that has thus flung her from its bosom, it will be their duty to pass her with an averted eye.

Is not this PERSECUTION? Is not the spirit which dictated this PUBLIC OUTRAGE on the feeling and the good name of a respectable matron, the same which presided at the stake of the Martyrs, the *auto da fes*, of the Inquisition, restrained, indeed, from such bloody excesses, by the laws, but still arriving at ends almost as cruel, through the circuitous wiles of a crafty church discipline? Does any one believe that, but for these restraints, the persecuting spirit that dictated this public exposure of a matron, for conscientiously dissenting from a particular point of faith, would have stopped short until it had persecuted her even unto death?

It is time, and high time, if it be not already too late, to put a stop to such open violations of the spirit of all those constitutions under which we live, to declare by a solemn act of the legislature, that no inhabitant of these United States, "by the blessing of God free and independent," forfeits his rights as a citizen by dissenting from any particular system of belief—his right to the protection of his person, his property, aye, and what is dearer than all these, of his REPUTATION, by entering or departing from a communion with any Church, as his reason and conscience dictates. Let them stay with a Church as long as they please, and when they request a dismissal let it not be accompanied by PUBLIC DISGRACE as if they had committed some horrible crime.

#### LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

FROM PRESIDENT ADAMS TO DR. BANCROFT, OF WORCESTER.

Quincy, Jan. 24, 1823.

Dear Sir: I thank you for your kind letter of December 30th, and above all for the gift of a precious volume. It is a chain of diamonds, set in links of gold. I have never read, nor heard read, a volume of sermons better calculated and adapted to the age and country in which it was written. How different from the sermons I heard, and read in the town of Worcester, from the years 1755 to 1758.

As my destiny in life has been somewhat uncommon, I must beg your pardon for indulging in a little egotism. I may say I was born and bred in the centre of Theological and Ecclesiastical controversy. A sermon of Mr. Bryant, minister of this Parish, who lived on a spot, now a part of the farm on which I live, occasioned the controversy between him and Mr. Niles, Mr. Porter, Mr. Bass, and many others, which broke out like the eruption of a volcano, and blazed with portentous aspect for many years. The death of Dr. Miller, the Episcopalian Minister of this town, produced a controversy between Dr. Mayhew and Mr. Apthorp, who were both so connected with this town, that they might almost be considered as inhabitants of it. I may almost say, that my eyes opened upon Books of Controversy. When I removed to Worcester in 1755, I found that country hot with controversy between the parties of Mr. Buckminster and Mr. Mellen. I became acquainted with Dyer, Doolittle and Baldwin, three notable disputants.\* Mr. Maccarty, though a Calvinist, was not a bigot, but the town was a scene of disputes all the time I lived there. When I left them, I entered into a scene of other disputations at the Bar, and not long afterwards disputations of another kind in politics. In later times, I have

\*These men were professed deists, then resident in Worcester.

lived with Atheists, Deists, and scepticks, with Cardinals, Archbishops, Monks, Priests and Friars of the Roman Catholic persuasion; with Archbishops, Bishops, Deans and Priests of the Church of England. With Farmer, Price, Priestly, Kippis, Rees, Lindsey, Disney, and Jebb. With the English and Scottish Clergy in Holland, and especially with Dr. Maclain, at the Hague—I have conversed freely with most of the sects in America, and have not been wholly inattentive to the writings and reasonings of all these denominations of Philosophers and Christians. You may well suppose then, that I have had controversies enough; but after all, I declare to you, that your twenty-nine Sermons have expressed the result of all my reading, experience, and reflections, in a manner more satisfactory to me than I could have done in the best days of my strength.

The most afflictive circumstances that I have witnessed, in the lot of humanity, are the narrow views, the unsocial humor, the fastidious scorn, and repulsive tempers of all denominations, excepting one. I cannot conclude this letter without adding an anecdote. One of the zealous Mendicants for Contributions to the funds of the Missionary societies, called upon a gentleman in Haverhill, and requested his charity. The gentleman declined subscribing, but added, there are in and about the town of ——— nine Clergymen, Ministers of nine Congregations, not one of whom lives upon terms of civility with any others, will admit none other into his Pulpit, nor be permitted to go into the Pulpit of any other; now if you will raise a fund to send Missionaries to ——— to convert these nine Clergymen to Christianity, I will contribute as much as any man.

I am, sir, with great esteem, your obliged friend, and humble servant,

JOHN ADAMS.

N. B. The name of a town is omitted.

The beauty of a religious life is one of its greatest recommendations. What does it profess? Peace to all mankind. It teaches us those arts which will render us beloved and respected, which will contribute to our present comfort as well as our future happiness. Its greatest ornament is charity.—It inculcates nothing but love and simplicity of affection; it breathes nothing but the purest spirit of delight, in short, it is a system perfectly calculated to benefit the heart, improve the mind, and enlighten the understanding.

*The Tear.*—A Tear is what? 'Tis the overflowing of the cup of sensibility—the index to a soul fraught with feeling—the ailment of a heart drooping in solitude—with the base, 'tis the arms of warfare, against the innocence of loveliness, simplicity and beauty; with woman, 'tis the shield of defence against the wily and insidious—her weapon of offence to the cold, the obdurate, the unfeeling; with the parent, 'tis the blessing of age on the offspring of youthful vigor and affection; with the child, 'tis the supporting staff of filial piety; with friends, 'tis the token of the communion of souls; to the afflicted, 'tis the administering angel of consolation—the balm of Gilead to the wounded spirit—the dew of sympathy to the withering flowers of sorrow.

When your reason and judgment gain an ascendancy over one evil propensity, consider the victory as worthy of perpetual commemoration

#### DIED,

At Barchamsted, on the 1st inst. MR. SAMUEL CASE, aged 17 years. By the death of this promising youth the relations of the deceased have lost an affectionate Son and brother. May the Father of mercies grant them the consolations of his spirit and enable them to bear the stroke with christian fortitude.

#### POETRY.

*From the Christian Register.*

#### SPRING.

When Spring unlocks the flowers  
To paint the laughing soil;  
When Summer's balmy breezes  
Refresh the mower's toil;  
When Winter holds in frosty chains  
The fallow and the flood:  
In God the earth rejoices still,  
And owns her Maker good.

The birds that wake the morning,  
And those that love the shade;  
The winds that swell the ocean,  
Or lull the drowsy glade;  
The sun that from his amber bower,  
Rejoices on his way;  
The moon and stars their Rulers state  
In silent pomp display.

Shall Man, the heir of nature,  
Expectant of the sky—  
Shall man alone, unthankful,  
The voice of praise deny?  
No, let the sun forsake his course,  
The Seasons cease to be—  
Thee, Maker, shall we yet adore,  
And, Saviour, honor Thee.

The flowers of Spring may wither,  
The fruits of Summer fade,  
The Winter fall untimely,  
The birds forsake the shade,  
The rivers fail, the ocean's tide  
Unlearn his old decree,  
But, Lord, in Nature's dying hour  
Our love shall cling to Thee.

#### ANECDOTE.

There was once a superstitious mother who was continually talking to her children of hell. She described it to them as a place that God had built with high, broad, thick walls, and filled with an incalculable quantity of burning brimstone; and she often declared that it was one of the most useful sections of the Universe, which cost the divine Being as much labor, as heaven or earth. One of her children, happening to cast its eye once upon the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, turned to its mother and said, I here read that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" why do I not read that he as you say, created hell also? The mother confounded, stammered a while for a reply, but finally reprimanded her child for asking such a wicked question.

JUST RECEIVED, AND FOR SALE AT THIS OFFICE.

BALLOU ON ATONEMENT,  
BALLOU'S NOTES ON THE PARABLES,  
Do. SERMONS,  
Do. CATECHISM,  
KNEELANDS LECTURES

—ALSO—

*A variety of Pamphlets on various subjects.*

PRINTED BY J. T. BEEBE, SEMI-MONTHLY,  
FOR THE PROPRIETORS.

A FEW RODS SOUTH OF THE LITTLE BRIDGE,  
AT ONE DOLLAR PER ANNUM—PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.